

# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

THR.COM/AFM

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DAILY  
No 6

NOVEMBER  
10, 2014

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Once Upon A Dream  
Productions founder,  
and actor  
Jeffery Patterson  
brings the family  
back to entertainment.

A portrait of Jeffery Patterson, a man with long blonde hair and a full beard, wearing a dark suit jacket over a patterned shirt. He is standing with his hands clasped in front of him, looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred cityscape with palm trees and buildings.

# JEFFERY PATTERSON

[www.onceuponadreamproductions.com](http://www.onceuponadreamproductions.com) | [JefferyPatterson.net](http://JefferyPatterson.net)

Rachael Leigh Cook

M I N D G A T E

DELIVERY DECEMBER 2015



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# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

SANTA MONICA  
WEATHER  
AND HIGH  
TEMPS

TODAY  
66° F  
19° C

TOMORROW  
68° F  
20° C

## PARKER ROM COM SELLS WIDE

By Scott Roxborough

International buyers are taking *All Roads Lead to Rome*, an upcoming romantic comedy starring **Sarah Jessica Parker**. AMBI Distribution, which is producing the film and selling it worldwide, has closed deals across much of the world, including to StudioCanal for Australia/New Zealand, ZDF for Germany, Corbi Media for Spain, California Filmes for Latin America and SPI for Eastern Europe.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Buyers Warm to Chase's *Shelby*

By Pamela McClintock

Dealmakers are barking for **Chevy Chase's** *Shelby*. The holiday film has landed a U.S. home with Starz Media, as well as striking deals in a number of major territories overseas for Highland Park Media, which is representing worldwide rights. Anchor Bay Entertainment will handle video distribution in the U.S. as part of the Starz pact.

Directed by **Brian K. Roberts**, the film follows a down-on-his-luck dog who escapes from the local pound and finds himself in the home of a young wannabe magician and his grandfather (Chase). **John Paul Ruttan** and **Tom Arnold** also star, with **Rob Schneider** voicing the role of the mischievous pooch.

"As actors, we've all been warned never to work with dogs and children, but there's something about *Shelby* that's very refreshingly family and funny at the same time," Chase said in a statement.

The Fyzz Facility, based in the U.K. and L.A., developed the story and financed the film in conjunc-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## Take Down

The first cast shot from Jim Gillespie's *Take Down* is a vision of entitlement gone bad. The teen thriller from the director of *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, which Mimi Steinbauer's Radiant Films International is selling at AFM, features a group of wayward kids of billionaire parents sent to island boot camp to straighten them out. But when they are taken hostage by kidnappers, the spoiled rich kids have to use their newfound survival skills to fight for their lives.

## Is It Now the American VOD Market?

Even Tarantino's holding out for a *Hateful Eight* deal with Netflix. Says one veteran: 'Movies, television and online are completely immersed with each other now' By Scott Roxborough and Pamela McClintock

Things have been quiet this year at the American Film Market. Foot traffic in the corridors of the Loews Hotel, usually swarming with dealmakers and wannabes, was undeniably light. It is a sign, insiders say, of a market in transition, as the decline in traditional DVD sales and the Netflix-driven rise of VOD revolutionize the business.

Foreign buyers, whose deep pockets always have fueled growth at AFM, found little to appeal to them this year. The kind of bulletproof, premium, commercial projects that distributors need in these uncertain times have been few and far between.

Arguably only **Quentin Tarantino's** *The Hateful Eight* and **Shane Black's** *The Nice Guys*, starring **Russell Crowe** and **Ryan Gosling**, truly fit the bill. **Alex Walton** of sales group Bloom, which sold out worldwide on *Nice Guys*, including a deal with Warner Bros. for North America, notes that the lack of sufficient bankable films meant "regardless of quantity, there probably still isn't enough product for some markets. Foreign distributors without big output deals will suffer."

But while the supply side of the equation is hurting, there are signs of increasing demand as Netflix and other VOD operations snatch up film rights and the appetite of emerging territories — read: China — continues to grow. Netflix also is complicating matters

in the traditional foreign-sales business. Buyers vying for *Hateful Eight* complained that they were unable to close deals with The Weinstein Co. on the picture because Tarantino was holding out for a global VOD deal with the online giant. A number of major foreign buyers told *THR* that if the Weinsteins decide to go with Netflix, it will be harder to make the numbers work and earn a profit from *Hateful Eight*, despite Tarantino's brand and track record.

When it comes to China, though, opinions are mostly bullish. Producer **Brett Ratner**, whose indie project *The Water Diviner*, directed by and starring Crowe, was picked up by Warners for domestic distribution, called China "the saving grace" of the indie film business. Millennium Films President **Mark Gill** concurs, noting that the box office success of Millennium's *The Expendables 3* in China — the film earned \$73 million there even though it had been leaked online by pirates — showed that the Asian nation was "finally getting control of piracy."

After years of promises on the production side, China also is starting to deliver. *Great Wall*, a \$135 million epic from LeVision Pictures and Legendary East, the Asian unit of the U.S. film production company, is set to begin shooting in February.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

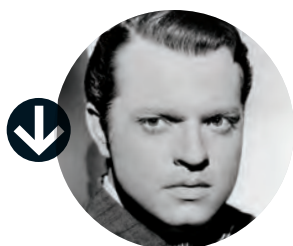


THR HEAT INDEX



**SAM WORTHINGTON**

Not content to have three *Avatar* sequels in the works and *Cake* and *Everest* already in the can, the Aussie actor is set to begin shooting the thriller *The Hunger's Prayer*, which sold around the world at AFM.



**ORSON WELLES**

Nearly 30 years after his death, the legendary director still needs distribution on his unfinished final film, the 1972 drama *The Other Side of the Wind*, which producer **Frank Marshall** and Royal Road Entertainment have teamed up to complete.

KNOW YOUR DEALMAKER



**ALEX WALTON**

**President, Bloom Entertainment**  
Walton's fledgling sales and financing company — his partner is Garmin heir **Ken Kao** — completed international sales on **Shane Black's** 1970s drama *The Nice Guys* and **Michael Apted's** thriller *Unlocked* and also is shopping the **Kevin Spacey** starrer *Nixon & Elvis*.

MEANWHILE, IN THE REAL WORLD ...

► **Christopher Nolan's** *Interstellar* looked set for a No. 2 debut at the weekend box office with \$50 million domestically, behind Disney's *Big Hero 6*.

► **One Direction, Katy Perry** and **Ariana Grande** were the big winners at Sunday night's MTV European Music Awards. One Direction swept with five awards at the Glasgow-based event, which was hosted by **Nicki Minaj**.

► Germans celebrated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

VOD Market

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

LeVision CEO **Zhang Zhao** sees the project as a template for co-productions between Hollywood and China and a symbol of how China can be a great revenue source for independent studios. "I thank people like Lionsgate and **Harvey Weinstein**," says Zhang. "Because of them I have a chance to make a successful model in China. For these mini-major and independent movies, China eventually comes to the stage where it can generate half the box office for the global market."

Who will rise and who will fall in the new world order remains to be seen, though flexibility will be a key survival skill. Part of that is a willingness to do deals with TV buyers, versus going the traditional theatrical route. "The worlds of movies, television and online are completely immersed with each other now," says Content Film's **Jamie Carmichael**, whose AFM slate includes *The Eichmann Show*, which will air on the BBC in the U.K. "There's no one size fits all anymore."

— CLIFFORD COONAN CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.



Parker

Parker

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

*Rome* centers on uptight Maggie (Parker) and her former Italian lover, Luca (**Raoul Bova**), who go on a road trip across Italy in pursuit of Maggie's rebellious teenage daughter (**Rosie Day**). **Claudia Cardinale** co-stars as Luca's mother.

**Ella Lemhagen** (*The Crown Jewels*) is directing *Rome* and co-wrote the screenplay with **Cindy Myers** and **Josh Appignanesi**. The film currently is shooting in Italy.

AMBI Pictures principals **Andrea Iervolino** and **Monika Bacardi** and Paradox Studio's **Mikael Wiren** are financing the picture. Iervolino and Bacardi are producing with **Silvio Muraglia** of Paradox Studios. Wiren is executive producing with **Frank Konigsberg**. THR

Shelby

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion with Canada's **Naked Fury** and **Outpost Media**.

Territories where the film has sold include the U.K. (Signature Entertainment), Australia and New Zealand (Jigsaw), Benelux (Just Bridge), France (Zylo), Middle East (Falcon), Slovakia (TV JOJ), Fox Asia (PanAsia TV) and Turkey (Profile Media).

**Wayne Marc Godfrey, David Gilbery** and **Robert Jones** are executive producing for Fyzz Facility, a financing and production outfit whose slate includes *London Fields*, **Jennifer Aniston's** *Cake* and the upcoming thriller *The Survivalist*, as well as **Martin Scorsese's** *Silence*. THR



Shelby

CAROLLA SKEWERS ATTENDEES

By Scott Roxborough

Comedian **Adam Carolla** isn't known for holding back and on his Nov. 9 visit to AFM, the podcaster and former *Man Show* star let the film industry have it, saying he saw "more douche bags per square foot" walking through the lobby of the Loews Hotel, where AFM is based, than anywhere else on earth. "Nothing brings out this level of douche baggery as the film industry," Carolla said, before adding, "If Al Qaeda hit this hotel, it would be the day the douche bag died. It would take America years to replenish its supply."

Carolla was at AFM to talk about his success in going outside the industry to finance his two upcoming projects. He raised the entire \$1.4 million budget for his comedy *Road Hard* via crowdfunding and bankrolled his documentary on **Paul Newman's** second career as a race car driver entirely out of his own pocket. THR



Carolla

Easternlight Pacts With Huace

By Clifford Coonan

Arclight's Asian unit Easternlight is partnering with Chinese film/TV production and distribution company Huace on female superhero movie *Lights Out* and casting is underway for an A-list Chinese actress for the lead. *Hitman* helmer **Xavier Gens**, whose thriller *Crucifixion* also was announced at AFM, will direct.

Huace aggressively is looking to expand overseas. In October, the company bought a stake in South Korea's Next Entertainment World for \$52.7 million, the biggest collaboration to date between Chinese and Korean film companies.

*Lights Out* is the story of a blind girl who lives alone in her family's secluded mansion with her seeing-eye dog after the death of her father during a Secret Service operation. When gangsters break in, she makes use of the fighting skills taught to her by her father. THR





## ▶ THE 2014 AFM POSTER AWARDS

THR pays tribute to the most amusing and over-the-top promotional materials from the year's market

Korea  
Edition

## 3 QUESTIONS WITH MIKE TYSON



By Scott Roxborough

The boxing legend dropped by AFM to promote Bert Marcus' documentary *Champs*, which looks at the lives and careers of Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Bernard Hopkins.

**How does the version of Mike Tyson we know from comedies like *The Hangover* compare to the Mike Tyson we see in this film?**

It's overtly different. This isn't Mike Tyson, the good-natured guy. In *Champs* it gets pretty dark. It's about someone being vulnerable and naked and a lot of stuff is pretty embarrassing. I squandered all my wealth. But I lived a life like you could never believe.

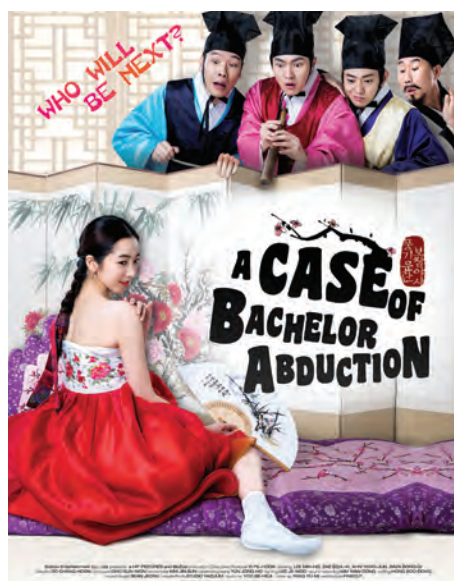
**You also helped produce this film.**

**How was that?**

I followed Bert's lead. I went out of my way with making the phone calls, with people I'd never seen in my life. To start demanding stuff, selling stuff to people. I've never had to sell anything to people, verbally. That was pretty new. But I feel comfortable being uncomfortable.

**This film traces the highs and lows of your life. Where are you now personally?**

I'm still struggling on a day-to-day basis. Right now, I'm kicking life's ass. If I was to die this moment, I would think I was truly blessed. I was overpaid. I really did a job on life. Now I'm reaching another climax to my life. I was the scary guy, now everyone thinks I'm an actor. I went to this school and I'm talking to these kids and the teacher had to show them pictures of me fighting, cause none of them knew I was a fighter! **THR**



### MOST CENSORED ROM-COM

**A Case of Bachelor Abduction**  
Something tells us pixelated bars will be blurring out the best moments of this romantic comedy.



### MOST DATED TITLE

**Live TV**

The film asks the age-old question: "Will you die for more 'likes'?" Probably not, though we might be persuaded to die for more pokes.



### MOST OBLIVIOUS

**Manhole**

Um, ladies? Behind you, there's a ... well, there's a man in the manhole.



### MOST TOPICAL USE OF CURRENT EVENTS

**Mourning Grave**

The true story of a nurse who returns home after treating Ebola patients in West Africa, and whenever someone mentions the word "quarantine" to her, she shushes them with her blood-stained finger.



# The Hardest-Working Men at AFM

THR pays tribute to six tireless tough guys who have left their indelible mark on the American Film Market and could teach the newcomers a thing or two about nailing that difficult second (or, in some cases, third) career act By Scott Roxborough



## Michael Biehn

AGE 58

AFM PREDECESSOR

Michael Dudikoff

TOUGH GUY BONA FIDES

▼ *The Terminator*, *Aliens*

GLOBAL BOX OFFICE \$1 billion

That's right, thanks to James Cameron blockbusters like *The Terminator* and *Aliens* (not to mention *The Rock* with fellow AFM legend Nic Cage) Biehn's global box office tally is roughly a billion. While rarely playing the lead, Biehn carved out a nice niche for himself early in his career and now is striking gold in AFM land with a flood of genre movies. Biehn has numerous titles on offer this year, including *Kickback* from Talking Lens Productions, WTFilms' *Hidden in the Woods* and *Up and Down* from Aspect Film.



## Nicolas Cage

AGE 50

AFM PREDECESSOR

Mickey Rourke

TOUGH GUY BONA FIDES

▼ *Ghost Rider*, *Drive Angry*

GLOBAL BOX OFFICE \$2.4 billion

Cage is the closest thing AFM has to a money-back guarantee. Whatever the film, whatever the genre, if it's got Cage upfront, it's going to sell. "Video is hard these days, but those Nicolas Cage films, they always seem to work," says Ralph Dietrich of Swiss distributor Ascot Elite. Cage has lent his talents to franchises (*National Treasure*, *Ghost Rider*, *The Croods*), straight-up genre fare (*Stolen*, *Rage*, *The Frozen Ground*) and critically acclaimed art house fare (*Leaving Las Vegas*, *Joe*), often within the same year. His AFM slate this year includes Arclight's apocalypse drama *Left Behind*, the supernatural film *Pay the Ghost* from Voltage Pictures and the heist movie *Men With No Fear* from The Exchange.



## Rutger Hauer

AGE 70

AFM PREDECESSOR

Jurgen Prochnow

TOUGH GUY BONA FIDES ▼ *Blade Runner*, *Hobo With a Shotgun*

GLOBAL BOX OFFICE \$245 million

He has played an android with a soul in *Blade Runner*, a Nazi fighter in *Soldier of Orange* and, well, a Hobo With a Shotgun. In a career spanning four decades, Hauer has moved effortlessly between rough-and-ready genre fare and awards-worthy projects like *Escape From Sobibor*. Recently, Hauer earned critical acclaim for his performance in Dutch drama *The Heineken Kidnapping* and found a new fan base thanks to his recurring role as Sookie's Fairy Grandfather on *True Blood*. But he still delivers the AFM goods, with films like Ambi Distribution's *2047 — Sights of Death* and Lee Tamahori's action epic *Emperor*, which Corsan is selling at the market. "I like killer roles," says Hauer. "Those can be anything, [but] even as a killer or killer character, I only play the man."



## Tony Jaa

AGE 38

AFM PREDECESSOR

Jet Li (with a little Jean-Claude Van Damme)

TOUGH GUY BONA FIDES

The ▼ *Ong-bak* franchise

GLOBAL BOX OFFICE \$75 million

The Thai martial arts master is the most likely successor to such AFM legends as Jackie Chan and Jet Li. Launched onto the international scene with the *Ong-bak* films — created to highlight his kick-ass talents — Jaa will appear in the upcoming *Fast & Furious 7*, which is certain to further boost his market value. AFM titles include Hyde Park International's *Skin Trade* and *SPL2* from Bravos Pictures. Jaa also has been linked to Stephen Fung's *Kickboxer*, which The Exchange is bringing to market.



## Michael Madsen

AGE 57

AFM PREDECESSOR Gary Busey

TOUGH GUY BONA FIDES

▼ *Reservoir Dogs*, *Kill Bill*

GLOBAL BOX OFFICE \$151 million

The hardest-working man at AFM, Madsen often averages a dozen or more jobs a year, taking everything from bit parts to video game voiceovers to top-of-the-marquee billing. A small sampling of his upcoming indie slate includes the Kevin MacDonald-directed thriller *The Witching Hour*; the spaghetti Western *Badlanders* from Enzo G. Castellari; *Skin Traffik*, which Arcstone is selling at AFM; and *The Hateful Eight*, Madsen's reunion with his *Reservoir Dogs* and *Kill Bill* director Quentin Tarantino. Madsen's advice to up-and-comers: "Be on time, mind your business and make sure you learn your dialogue." The one role Madsen never has been offered but would love to play? "Whitey Bulger," he says. "Anyone who knows me would understand."



## Jason Statham

AGE 47

AFM PREDECESSOR Bruce Willis

TOUGH GUY BONA FIDES

*The Expendables*,

▼ *The Transporter*

GLOBAL BOX OFFICE \$800 million

He's the only action star to emerge since the genre's '80s heyday who can claim the crown once worn by Schwarzenegger, Stallone, et al. The British star was part of *The Expendables* A-list, but he has many more franchises to his name, from *The Transporter* — recently relaunched on TV with Ed Skrein filling Statham's boots — to *Crank*, *The Mechanic* and a recurring role in the unstoppable *Fast & Furious* series. His AFM tally this year includes Nu Image/Millennium's *Mechanic: Resurrection*, alongside Tommy Lee Jones and Jessica Alba, and *Wild Card*, Sierra/Affinity's actioner in which he plays a compulsive gambler who finds work as a bodyguard for his friends.





BRETT GOLDSTEIN

CATHERINE TATE

NATALIA TENA

LAURA HADDOCK



GRAIN MEDIA JONES COMPANY PRODUCTIONS AND THE FVZZ FACILITY PRESENT A FVZZ FACILITY FILM TWO PRODUCTION'S 'SUPERBOB' IN ASSOCIATION WITH DRAGON ROOT SECURITIES GOLDCREST FILMS INTERNATIONAL  
STARRING BRETT GOLDSTEIN NATALIA TENA LAURA HADDOCK RUTH SHEEN WITH DAVID HAREWOOD AND CATHERINE TATE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MATTIAS NYBERG EDITOR KATIE BRYER COMPOSER RUPERT CHRISTIE CASTING DIRECTOR ELAINE GRAINGER  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ORLANDO VON EINSIEDEL DAVID GILBERY BEN KAYE ARNAUD LANNIC CHRISTOPHE LANNIC NICK QUESTED PRODUCERS JON DREVER WAYNE MARC GODFREY AND ROBERT JONES WRITTEN BY BRETT GOLDSTEIN AND WILL BRIDGES DIRECTED BY JON DREVER



Genesis at AFM 2014:

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Final Market Screening  
TODAY • 11:00 : AMC Santa Monica 4



# Matt Brown

The up-and-coming helmer talks about his second film, *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, the challenges of shooting in India and why math geeks are like baseball fans

By Scoff Roxborough

IT TOOK BOSTON-BORN SCREENWRITER Matt Brown eight years to make *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, the story of self-taught mathematics genius Srinivasa Ramanujan. But his timing couldn't have been better. Period dramas about brainy Brits have never been more popular, with *The Imitation Game*, the story of code breaker and computer pioneer Alan Turing, and the Stephen Hawking biopic *The Theory of Everything* getting major Oscar buzz. Buyers at the American Film Market will get their first glimpse of the film, which stars *Shumdog Millionaire*'s Dev Patel as Ramanujan and Jeremy Irons as G.H. Hardy, the Cambridge mathematician who recognized Ramanujan's talent and mentored the Indian autodidact.

Brown, 43, spoke to *THR* about the long journey to get the film made, how he translated advanced mathematical theory to the screen and why he has a book club to thank for turning him on to the story.

**How did you come across this story? Did you know about Srinivasa Ramanujan before reading the book on his life by Robert Kanigel?**

I think I'd heard the story before. It's referenced in *Good Will Hunting*, but that's the only reference I really knew. It was really the book. My aunt, who lives in Big Sur, was a member of a book club and I was visiting her and I saw the book sitting there. I read it and the whole story really appealed to me on a whole slew of levels. It wasn't the mathematics: The themes of friendship in the story were really the main draw. It's an East meets West story, but the heart of it is this connection between Ramanujan and his British mentor G.H. Hardy. The themes of isolation drew me in, the power of people to connect across cultures and the cost that comes from waiting, out of fear, to try and make that connection.

**Why did it take so long for the film to get made?**

I wish I knew. These kinds of films are difficult to make and get financing for — if they get made then magic can happen. I mean, look at *The King's Speech* — I don't know why that took so long. Of course, the casting and foreign sales game is a challenge. Especially as I'm not a known director. It really took a lot of belief. I could complain about the wait, but I choose to be grateful and look at the positives. It took a tremendous amount of belief and faith in me from the producer Ed Pressman, who has a long



"I think it's a miracle when any film like this gets made," says Brown, pictured on the *Infinity* set in Chennai, India.

history of backing and supporting new filmmakers, and from David Garrett of Mister Smith Entertainment, which picked up world sales, something that really helped.

**When did you cast Dev Patel in the lead as Ramanujan?**

That came very early. Dev was with me for few years. We worked through notes and drafts of the script, getting to know each other as the project developed. Then, just about exactly a year ago — I remember because I'm a Boston Red Sox fan and it was the World Series — Jeremy Irons came on to play Hardy. Then it came together quickly. Our amazing casting director Reg Poerscout-Edgerton brought in the rest of the cast, who are just incredible. Getting Stephen Fry was really special because he had a similar project about Ramanujan and Hardy that he had been trying to get made for years. And that's Stephen Fry! So it tells you how hard it can be.

**You shot on location in Cambridge and in India, including at Ramanujan's alma mater, Trinity College.**

We were the first-ever film to shoot there. Trinity had never allowed a film inside their grounds before, including *Chariots of Fire*. We were so grateful. There was a special moment when they opened the gate and pulled the whole crew into a room overlooking Neville's Court. And the junior bursar told us about the importance of this story for the college and the university. You see, Ramanujan was Indian and at that time [in 1914], it was a challenge for Cambridge to take in this man who had no formal education to speak of. For Hardy to bring him over there and for the university to recognize this man's genius is a

real point of pride for Cambridge. It was one of the greatest partnerships in the history of mathematics. Truly groundbreaking. And it makes you think: How many people are there out there in the world that never get discovered?

**What was the main challenge of shooting in India?**

Well, we shot in the city of Chennai [formerly called Madras], which is in a Tamil-speaking region. And then we had Hindi and English, so there were three languages being spoken and then of course the incredible heat there. The Indian teams are wonderful, but after shooting for a month in England it was a major adjustment. Another big challenge was to make Chennai in 2014 look like Madras in 1910. There's very little from that period left standing; you really have to search it out and work with what you have. Our production designer, Luciana Arrighi, was incredible, re-creating Madras on a budget under really difficult conditions.

**How important was it to you to get the mathematics right for the film?**

Incredibly important. Math people are among the most obsessive and passionate in the world. I think only baseball fans — and maybe cricket fans — compare. We contacted the top five

living mathematicians in the field. Ken Ono, who is the leading expert in Ramanujan's theories, got on an airplane and joined us three days later. He went through every aspect of the script with me and the cast, making sure the math lined up and the art department got everything exactly right. If there's anything in the film that math geeks want to call me out on, they'll have to take it up with Ken. *THR*

## BY THE NUMBERS

2

Number of features directed by Brown, including *Ropewalk* (2000)

8

Years it took to get *The Man Who Knew Infinity* made

1729

The number of a taxi Hardy rode in to visit Ramanujan when he was sick in the hospital. Ramanujan noted it was the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways.



# VMI AFM 2014

PREMIERES  
VANTAGE MEDIA INTERNATIONAL / VISION MUSIC, INC  
SCREENING TODAY

LEIGHTON MEESTER

BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG

DEBRA MESSING

JULIAN SHATKIN

## LIKE SUNDAY LIKE RAIN

FRIENDSHIP IS THE MELODY OF LIFE

LIKE SUNDAY  
LIKE RAIN  
MONDAY NOV  
10TH 3:00PM

LOEWS 2

LOEWS 703

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PROMOTION

# SEE & BE SEEN — at the — BERLIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

BERLIN SPOTLIGHT: JANUARY 28  
ISSUE CLOSE: 1/16 | MATERIALS DUE: 1/17

FESTIVAL DAILIES  
2/5 - 2/15

THR.COM/BERLIN  
LIVE FEBRUARY 2015

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AFM  
2014

SCREENING GUIDE



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Entertainment's  
*The Magic Brush*

## TODAY

**9:00 AM** AMC 5, *Comet*, Content Media Corp., 91 mins.; Ocean Scr #, *Eden*, Voltage Pictures, 115 mins.; AMC 6, *Kafka's The Burrow*, Beta Cinema, 110 mins.; Broadway 3, *Song of the Sea*, Westend Films, 90 mins.; AMC 3, *The Duke of Burgundy*, Protagonist Pictures

**11:00 AM** Loews 2, *Angel*, Darclight Films; Loews 1, *Doonby*, Worldwide Film Entertainment LLC., 95 mins.; Fairmont 4, *Fear of Darkness*, Darclight Films, 90 mins.; Fairmont 1, *Ghadi*, Fortissimo Films, 100 mins.; Broadway 4, *Gloria! The Price of Fame*, 6 Sales, 100 mins.; AMC 2, *Manglehorn*, Westend Films, 97 mins.; Fairmont 2, *Metamorphoses*, Mk2 S.a, 102 mins.; Loews 3, *Posthumous*, Bleiberg Entertainment LLC., 93 mins.; Broadway 1, *Streif*, Red Bull Media House, 110 mins.; AMC 4, *Superbob*, Genesis Film Sales; Broadway 2, *The Ignorance of Blood*, Latido, 109 mins.; Fairmont 3, *The Magic Brush*, All Rights Entertainment Ltd., 87 mins.; AMC 7, *The Snow Queen II: The Snow King*, Wizart Animation, 80 mins.

**1:00 PM** Loews 1, *A Play on Words*, John

Stark Productions, 90 mins.; Loews 2, *Assassin Carnaby*, International, 90 mins.; Fairmont 2, *Take Care*, 13 Films

**3:00 PM** Fairmont 3, *American Beach House*, New Films Intl., 95 mins.; Broadway 2, *Big Game*, Altitude Film Sales; Fairmont 2, *Boonie Bears to the Rescue! (International Version)*, All Rights Entertainment Ltd., 94 mins.; Loews 1, *Chasing Taste*, Aspire Talent Management, 89 mins.; AMC 6, *Gemma Boverly*, Gaumont; Fairmont 1, *Last Weekend*, Aldamisa, 94 mins.; AMC 4, *Learning to Drive*, Westend Films, 105 mins.; Loews 2, *Like Sunday, Like Rain*, Vmi Worldwide, 104 mins.; Loews 3, *My Name Is Nobody*, Little Books Little Films LLC., 115 mins.; AMC 2, *Oil Painting*, First Hollywood Production, 97 mins.; Broadway 4, *On Any Sunday*, Red Bull Media House, 95 mins.; AMC 1, *Rats*, Uglichin and Co., 90 mins.; Broadway 1, *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, Westend Films, 103 mins.

**5:00 PM** Ocean Scr #, *Harbinger Down*, The Exchange

**7:00 PM** Ocean Scr #, *Lost Birds*, Kara Kedi Film, 120 mins.



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# REVIEWS

AFI FEST



Holmes' heroin addict tries to get out of a bad relationship.

## Heaven Knows What

Filmmaking brothers Josh and Benny Safdie train their cinema-verite gaze on the chaotic lives of heroin users on the streets of New York

BY DAVID ROONEY

THE DAYS OF *THE PANIC IN NEEDLE PARK*, TO NAME ONE iconic New York City drug movie, seem long gone, now that most of Manhattan's one-time junkie hangouts have been gentrified to within an inch of their lives. But in *Heaven Knows What*, Josh and Benny Safdie rescue that subculture from the invisible margins. They weave a small group of young heroin addicts into the fabric of the city streets with a grubby lyricism that's visually intoxicating even if its emotional impact remains somewhat muted.

Following their detour into unconventional sports documentary with *Lenny Cooke*, the sibling filmmaker team returns to the scruffy aesthetic, raw authenticity and unstrung characters of their first feature, *Daddy Longlegs*. Their new slice of life on the fringes is often hard to watch due to the pain, self-destructiveness and even the numbing Warholian monotony of the existences it depicts with a verite candor that owes much to John Cassavetes. But the film, which at times also recalls the lo-fi work of Gus Van Sant, is laced with moments of surprising poignancy, goofy low-key farce and even a weird kind of charm. It's also distinguished by an intense screen-acting debut from Arielle Holmes, playing an unflinching version of herself and her own experience. While the movie's theatrical prospects are slim, the triple showcase of Venice, Toronto and New York Film Festival slots should help build a platform for VOD exposure.

Ronald Bronstein, memorable as the less-than-model parent in *Daddy*

*Longlegs*, wrote the screenplay with Josh Safdie, based on Holmes' unpublished memoir, *Mad Love in New York City*. She plays Harley, a homeless drug addict in an obsessive on-again, off-again relationship with Ilya (Caleb Landry Jones), whose nihilistic indifference extends to encouraging her suicidal impulses. That results in Harley slashing her wrist and landing in Bellevue in a mesmerizing sequence, played without dialogue and flooded with unsettling synth scoring.

Among the film's most impressive qualities is the Safdie brothers' boldly textural use of music — predominantly Isao Tomita's electronica versions of Debussy, but also a little Tangerine Dream and James Dashow as well as some hardstyle and black metal.

The other standout element is Sean Price Williams' woozy cinematography, which hugs in close to the characters or sits back from a detached point of view, often shooting them in a bleached haze of light. They bleed into the visual field of sidewalks, storefronts, cars and pedestrians. This is not a portrait of New York's junkie street subculture conveniently tucked into some skeezy pocket of the city. Instead they move freely, sometimes chafing against their surroundings, through libraries, Internet cafes, bookstores and fast-food joints.

The loose narrative tracks Harley's half-hearted attempts to get by without Ilya. She brushes off the advances of abrasive Skully (rapper Necro) and slips into a friendship with Mike (Buddy Duress), an amusingly verbose dealer and fellow addict; he keeps her in smack but bristles when she can't pay, his tenderness shifting to hostility.

While there's a suggestion of a romantic triangle in Harley's oscillations between Ilya and Mike, the Safdies are less interested in story or character than in immersing us in a milieu that most people would prefer to ignore. The film observes Harley and her cohorts "spanging," street vernacular for begging, be it for spare change or subway entry; or stealing from a mailman's bag, sifting through the contents for gift cards or cash.

A joyride on the motorcycle of Mike's drug supplier Antoine (Benjamin Antoine Hampton) hints at momentary escape. But when the possibility of real deliverance surfaces via a hastily planned bus journey to Florida with the unpredictable Ilya, that notion is revealed to be an empty hope.

*Heaven Knows What* is a strange film, at once distancing and transfixing. If it's not as impactful as it might have been considering the experiences portrayed, it has potent atmosphere and an admirable refusal to put any kind of gloss on the bleak reality of its limbo world. It also helps that Holmes, Jones and Duress, as well as the mainly non-actors in secondary roles, all inhabit their characters with real conviction.

**Cast** Arielle Holmes, Caleb Landry Jones, Buddy Duress, Necro  
**Directors** Josh and Benny Safdie // 94 minutes



# Manglehorn

**Pacino is a small-town locksmith in a self-imposed emotional prison in David Gordon Green's portrait** BY DAVID ROONEY

THE MIX OF LIMPID naturalism and lyricism that often has distinguished David Gordon Green's indie films slides into sentimentality — or worse yet, whimsy — in *Manglehorn*. Those cloying excesses are even represented by their professional flag-bearer, the fully costumed mime artist. And while few things should trigger anyone's rage disorder like a backwater Marcel Marceau, the simmering title character played by a mostly subdued Al Pacino gives the guy a pass. Twice. It's hard to do likewise for Paul Logan's ham-fisted script, which painstakingly spells out every metaphor, whether it's spoken or visual.

One such loaded symbol is A.J. Manglehorn's line of work. He's a locksmith in small-town Texas, which means he's responsible for both the locks and the keys to his "own private prison." That emotional jail cell is a place where he lives with his numbness, his anger, his furball cat Fanny and his past mistakes, aired in voiceover letters written to Clara, the one true love that he screwed up. Those letters invariably are returned to sender, where the sting of rejection is represented by a small bee colony on the mailbox.

Manglehorn's solitude is conveyed in an uncharacteristically internalized performance from Pacino. But every opportunity for a quiet character study exploring the complexities of human connection is trampled by Logan's leaden dialogue, by those pervasive voiceovers, or by the beautiful but often far too pointed widescreen images of Green's regular cinematography collaborator, Tim Orr.

The tenderness of Manglehorn's letters ("I'm a wounded man, Clara") plays in contrast to his low opinion of the human fauna that surrounds him. He's courteous with his customers, as seen in a handful of house calls that give the portrait some welcome texture. But despite his good intentions, infrequent encounters with his grown son, Jacob (Chris Messina),

a smugly stereotypical commodities trader, tend to turn sour. And despite the hero worship of Gary (Harmony Korine), a ballplayer back when Manglehorn was coach, he generally finds that a little of the logorrheic businessman/pimp goes a long way. Jacob's 6-year-old daughter, Kylie (Skylar Gasper), is the only person who doesn't rattle Grandpa's nerves.

The one real window of cautious hope in Manglehorn's existence is a sunny bank teller named Dawn (geddit?), played by Holly Hunter, who like all of the cast here, deserves better. Every Friday when Manglehorn comes by to deposit his earnings, they exchange pleasantries about their ailing, aging pets. (The constipated cat has swallowed a key, for Christ's sake.) When Dawn accepts a casual invitation to join him at — wait for it — a "pancake jamboree," a flicker of romance is born. But Manglehorn sabotages any tentative overture even before knocking on her door for their first official date.

This is Logan's first produced

screenplay, and its immaturity is written in neon. But that's no excuse for Green and actors of the caliber of Pacino and Hunter buying it wholesale.

The signposts along the journey out of Manglehorn's black hole of maudlin regret toward his inevitable second chance are beyond obvious: Fanny's graphically covered intestinal surgery; Jacob's confused cry for help; an improbably late discovery of what goes on at Gary's tanning salon (which makes crusty old A.J. seem like the most naive guy on the planet); the unlocking of a charred safe salvaged from a fire. That's not to mention a multiple-car redneck pileup that yields a mile of chunky watermelon carnage. (Not kidding.) Even the exorcism of Clara and the boat on which Manglehorn planned to sail away with her is as literal as it gets.

All of which is too bad, because there's a stirring gentleness in the early scenes, along with Orr's seductive visuals, accompanied by the symphonic post-rock of Texas band Explosions in the Sky and the delicate scoring of David Wingo. But those elements just make you wish someone had made a stronger case for subtlety. Narrative muscle is also in short supply in

a film whose default position is dreamy meandering.

Pacino is certainly committed to the role, and this is by no means one of his blustery turns. However, the writing provides his character with no backstory, choosing instead to let the audience fill in details of the past transgressions that led him into darkness. But the film is so psychologically crude that such considerations become a thankless task.

Korine is manic and amusing, playing off his own bad-boy persona until the character is assassinated by a ludicrous speech extolling Manglehorn's virtues as "a man of miracles." Hunter rises above it all to the extent she can, though no actress should be obliged to play a woman's desperate need for love so nakedly.

Since stepping away from studio work, Green has been on an agreeable track, with his oddball Beckettian two-hander, *Prince Avalanche*, and his soulful Nicolas Cage redemption bid, *Joe*. But *Manglehorn* is a wrong turn.

**Sales** *WestEnd Films*

**Cast** *Al Pacino, Holly Hunter, Harmony Korine*

**Director** *David Gordon Green*  
*97 minutes*



Pacino's locksmith dreams about his lost love.





Long (right) keeps Rossum awake with his chatter.

## Comet

The intermittent charms of this time-jumping romance are blunted by the male lead's relentless blather

BY TODD MCCARTHY

JUST AS WOODY ALLEN ONCE INTENDED TO TITLE *ANNIE HALL* *Anhedonia*, Sam Esmail might well have called his debut feature not *Comet* but *Logorrhea*. The writer-director tries very hard to inject new life into the traditional boy-meets-girl romantic dramedy—but way too hard. Although there's talent on display in all aspects of this time-jumping, visually distinctive independent that rests its commercial hopes on the names of leads Justin Long and Emmy Rossum, Esmail strenuously overplays his hand with the torrent of obnoxious dialogue he asks his male lead to deliver, which is enough to make one want to run out several times for a breather. It's possible that certain young viewers might connect with the romantic spirit that smolders somewhere under the frantic, motormouthed verbal compulsion on display here, but most will wonder if the effort is worth it.

The yakking starts right off the bat at the unusual location of the Hollywood Forever cemetery, a real-life site of popular nocturnal screenings of older films. Although Kimberly (Rossum) is there with a very handsome guy (Eric Winter), this doesn't prevent Dell (Long), said to be a research scientist, from coming on to her with all the grace of a bulldozer; he assaults her with a barrage of commentary about anything and everything, some of it bright and witty and coherent, but much of it total BS. She's partly standoffish but sufficiently surprised and amused enough to not tell him to buzz off.

The pattern is much the same in the four other stages of their relationship, spanning a six-year period, that are layered into the mix. Be it in a Paris hotel room where they're preparing to attend a wedding, a fanciful old-style train ride set a year after their first breakup, a phone call and a years later reunion, Dell, consciously or not, seems to be trying to keep the relationship alive simply by talking all the time; the unacknowledged impulse would appear to be that, if he just keeps jabbering, Kimberly will never have the opportunity to call things off.

His relentless, domineering style certainly stems from insecurity; there's no question that Kimberly controls the relationship. She may be neurotic, but not uncharmingly so. Other than the fact that she can call the shots and he is obviously nuts about her, it's hard to glean why she keeps Dell in her life as long as she does; the film is so wrapped up in Dell's maniacal need to speak, be heard and valued that Kimberly's character gets short shrift despite sharing the screen the whole time.

That said, Esmail does succeed in creating an ambiance of palpable, if sometimes odd, romanticism, by virtue of Dell's surging need and the story's concentrated focus, as well as with atmospheric special effects (a meteor shower, double suns and other heightened natural phenomena), deliberately fanciful settings and an eclectic, smartly judged soundtrack featuring music by Daniel Hart. The film accomplishes quite a bit visually and aurally on what was clearly a limited budget.

**Sales** Content Media Corporation

**Cast** Justin Long, Emmy Rossum, Eric Winter, Kayla Servi

**Director-Screenwriter** Sam Esmail // 92 minutes

## Buzzard

A chilly allegory whose antihero is both compelling and repulsive

BY JOHN DEFORE

A DARK REFLECTION of the man-children populating contemporary American comedies, the protagonist of Joel Potrykus's *Buzzard* is so disaffected he seems almost to resent his own existence. Observing the sullen young man at a moment where everyday larceny may be leading to a psychopathic breakdown, the emotionally chilly film balances uneasy humor with faint suspense, setting up an inevitable-seeming end and wondering if it can be avoided. The unsettling result concludes the director's "Animal Trilogy" and should earn respect at fests and in art houses.

Joshua Burge plays Marty, a temp employee at a bank who spends most of his work hours plotting penny-ante scams. (In an opening scene, he's abusing his own bank's checking promotion, astonishing a branch manager who reluctantly hands over the \$50 new-customer bonus when Marty closes his account and immediately opens a fresh one.) He responds poorly when assigned some actual work by his boss—he's supposed to track down forwarding addresses for a stack of checks that have come back in the mail—but soon takes interest in the chore, realizing he can forge endorsements and deposit the checks in his own account. Naive about how this process works, he's frightened to learn that his boss soon will see the evidence of his crime. He stops going to work and flees his apartment, going underground as if he were being pursued by a team of federal agents.

Inviting himself to stay with nerdy, skittish co-worker Derek (played by the director), Marty abuses his host's reluctant hospitality. Both men are so arrested in their development that even their pastimes are out of date: *Nightmare on Elm Street* posters adorn Marty's walls, and the Nintendo console they play in

AFI FEST



Burge is a petty thief on the run.

Derek's basement hasn't been state-of-the-art since the '80s.

Though the character doesn't see the need to think through a justification for his crimes, his inchoate anticapitalist sensibility is offended when someone swindles him out of a few bucks. He loses his temper and goes on the run while the film foreshadows the possibility that his transgressions will turn violent.

Potrykus doesn't shy away from the character's repulsiveness (witness a long scene in which he gets spaghetti all over himself while eating), but he doesn't really condemn him either. The character, so convincingly embodied by Burge, exists beyond morality, like the carrion-eater that gives the film its title. The main difference between this film's buzzard and the more familiar winged variety is that Marty is feeding on a bloated body—American capitalism, with its inefficiencies, injustices and blind spots—that isn't yet dead.

**Cast** Joshua Burge, Joel Potrykus, Teri Ann Nelson, Alan Longstreet, Rico Bruce Wade

**Director-Screenwriter** Joel Potrykus // 97 minutes





Arterton gets to know her lustful new neighbor Luchini.

## Gemma Boverly

Anne Fontaine's latest is a breezy and enjoyable modern-day take on Flaubert's classic story BY JORDAN MINTZER

THE TIME PERIOD AND spelling may be different, but Gustave Flaubert's most famous creation is very much alive in *Gemma Boverly*, a breezy postmodern update of the classic novel that replaces the book's darker passages for tongue-in-cheek laughs and plenty of eye candy — whether it's the sprawling

Gallic countryside, a bakery filled with *boules de pain* or Madame Boverly herself.

Adapted from Posy Simmonds' popular graphic novel, this enjoyable outing from hit-or-miss director Anne Fontaine (*Coco Before Chanel*, *Adore*) stars British bombshell Gemma Arterton as the latest, and one of the sexiest,

incarnations of French literature's favorite desperate housewife. But it's co-star Fabrice Luchini, playing both neighbor and narrator, who winds up stealing the show, providing an amusing portrait of a man whose dual obsession with Flaubert and the woman next door leads to no good. Rolling out in France after a world premiere in Toronto, this handsomely mounted production earned nearly \$4 million at home and should score a decent hit for Gaumont abroad.

After quitting the world of Paris publishing, Martin Joubert (Luchini) moves back to his Normandy hometown to take over the family bakery, bringing along his nagging wife (Isabelle Candelier) and nitwit of a son (Kacey Mottet Klein). Nothing much happens in their humdrum little village until a newly married couple moves into the country house across the street: British expat Charlie Boverly (Jason Flemyng) and his gorgeous younger wife, Gemma (Arterton).

Immediately seduced by Gemma's beauty, as well as by the fact that she has nearly the same name (and as he soon will learn, same life) as Flaubert's heroine, Joubert starts keeping tabs on

his new neighbor while striking up a friendship that's filled with sexual tension, at least on his part. Inviting Gemma to an impromptu baking class in the back of his shop, he watches her get all hot and sultry as she kneads her first baguette in a rather over-the-top sequence that recalls some of the kitchen hijinks in *Chocolat*. (This film could be retitled *Pain au Chocolat*.)

Written by Fontaine and Jacques Rivette regular Pascal Bonitzer, the script somewhat departs from Simmonds' original text to favor Joubert over Gemma, who's mostly seen from his point of view and never develops into a full-bodied personality. In that respect the movie also differs from the Flaubert original, while being much more lighthearted, though in both cases the Gemma/Emma character remains a bit of a cipher — a person onto which the reader or viewer (or Joubert) can project their own thoughts and desires.

**Sales** Gaumont

**Cast** Fabrice Luchini, Gemma Arterton, Jason Flemyng, Isabelle Candelier

**Director** Anne Fontaine  
99 minutes

## Metamorphoses

A pleasantly low-key literary adaptation with a lot of ideas beneath the shimmering surface BY BOYD VAN HOEIJ

LIKE HIS COMPATRIOT, FRANÇOIS OZON, French director Christophe Honoré loves to work in different genres. Honoré's last film, *Beloved*, was a big-budget musical starring Catherine Deneuve that tipped its hat to the work of Jacques Demy and closed the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. His new film, *Metamorphoses*, a low-key and contemporary adaptation of Ovid's colossal collection of Greco-Roman myths, is reminiscent of Pasolini's literary adaptations and features practically only nonprofessional actors.

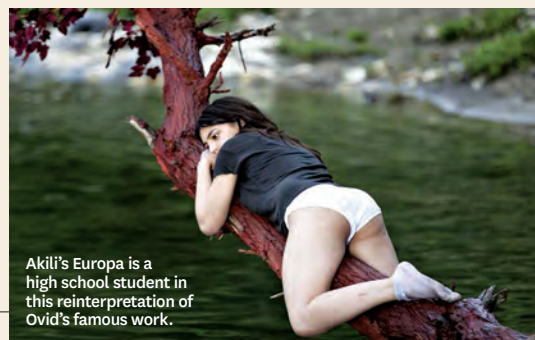
It would be impossible to fit all the fables of Ovid's 15 books into a single feature. However, Honoré at least has stayed true to Ovid's technique, also organizing the stories he's chosen into a larger whole. His binding element is the beautiful Europa, here a high-school student played by Amira Akili, of North African descent. The casting choice alone justifies this artistic endeavor, as her name and looks are of course significant, sug-

gesting the multicultural melting pot France has become or at least should have become by now. Interestingly, classics scholars will realize this isn't even a very revisionist point of view, as Europa traditionally is seen as being of Phoenician origins (i.e., outside of the continent that would be named after her).

In the three segments into which the film is divided, Europa encounters first the hunky Jupiter (Sebastien Hirel), king of the gods; then Bacchus (Damien Chappelle), god of wine, madness and ecstasy; and finally, Orpheus (George Babluani), who often is associated

with death. In each chapter, Europa doesn't only live through a particular myth but also is told other stories, so a rich tapestry of interconnected narratives emerges. Highlights include the stories of Tiresias (Rachid O.), here a transgendered doctor who'll answer Jupiter's query of whether men or women have more (sexual) pleasure, and Narcissus (Arthur Jacquin, indeed devastatingly handsome), who famously succumbed to his own beauty.

Acting from the large cast is naturalistic, insofar as the behavior of gods can be called that at all. Many of the more fantastical elements, such as the transformation of several characters into animals, are handled through simple cuts in the editing. Indeed, the unfussiness of the mise-en-scene — as well as the presence of good-looking, often naked nonprofessional actors — is reminiscent of Pasolini's literary films from the early 1970s, such as his *Decameron* and *1001 Nights* adaptations. However, there's a lot less humor in Honoré's work, which feels more gently melancholy.



Akili's Europa is a high school student in this reinterpretation of Ovid's famous work.

**Sales** MK2

**Cast** Amira Akili, Sebastien Hirel

**Director-Screenwriter** Christophe Honoré  
101 minutes





The family celebrates Saoirse's birthday.

## Song of the Sea

After making the Oscar-nominated *The Secret of Kells*, director Tomm Moore sticks to Irish folklore for his latest film

BY BOYD VAN HOEIJ

**S**ONG OF THE SEA IS ANOTHER SATISFYING SMACK IN THE FACE of computer-generated 3D animation from Irish director Tomm Moore, after his earlier, Oscar-nominated *The Secret of Kells*. Working with wondrous watercolor backgrounds and 2D animation in which the impressions of depth and perspective are almost exclusively suggested through overlapping flat surfaces, this pleasingly old-school item again relies on Irish folklore to color a familiar story about a young boy venturing out into a dark and enchanted world. Slightly more accessible than *Kells* in the story department and just as gorgeous, this kids title stands a solid chance of capturing some of that earlier film's success both on the awards circuit and at the box office.

Ben (voiced by David Rawle) is the smart-alecky, occasionally grumpy 10-year-old of the burly if forlorn Conor (Brendan Gleeson, who voiced the Abbot in *Kells*), a widower who mans a lonely lighthouse on an island off the Irish coast. As shown in a brief prologue, Ben's mother (Lisa Hannigan) died while giving birth to his kid sister, Saoirse, who's now 6 but has never spoken a word. Audiences quickly learn — though Ben doesn't until much later — that the little girl has inherited a special gift from her mother: she's a "selkie," a seal-child who becomes human when on land (and here needs a special coat to turn back into a seal in the water).

Things start to go haywire when the kids' bossy grandmother (Fionnula Flanagan) takes them to Dublin, away from the dreary and dangerous lighthouse and the sea. But thankfully for the siblings there's a special shell that their mother gave them, which, when blown like a horn, is able to summon luminous little particles that dance in the air like fireflies and that seem to indicate the way back home.

The narrative's general rites-of-passage layout is of course extremely familiar, though, especially for foreign audiences, many of the stories-within-stories and characters that dot this particular journey will feel new as well as delightful.

Something similar happens in terms of the visuals, overseen by production designer Adrien Merigeau, who also worked on *Kells* and who here combines familiar 2D elements with details that make them look fresh and often quite extraordinary. The backgrounds, in watercolors, have a slightly hazy quality that suggests mist and the general dampness that both are typical of Ireland.

Even if older audiences might find the story somewhat thin, there's so much to enjoy on a purely audiovisual level that few will complain, with the feather-light score from Bruno Coulais and Irish band Kila, who earlier collaborated on *Kells*, another major asset.

**Sales** WestEnd Films

**Cast** David Rawle, Brendan Gleeson, Fionnula Flanagan, Pat Shortt

**Director** Tomm Moore // 93 minutes

## Run

The current hotness of African cinema just got a little hotter with the maturation of this promising new talent

BY LESLIE FELPERIN

**C**OMPACT IN TERMS OF duration but stretched wide in its scope, *Run* makes one young man's picaresque adventures into a magical realist microcosm of the Ivory Coast's recent history. It's the first fiction feature for its director, Ivorian native Philippe Lacote, who cut his teeth on the documentaries *Chronicles of War in the Ivory Coast* (2008) and *Cairo Hours* (2003), as well as several well-received shorts.

After the eerie opening sequence finds a rag-robed Run (Abdoul Karim Konate) shooting the nation's prime minister in an Abidjan cathedral, the hero shows just how he got his name by hoofing it across town, his somewhat unnecessary voiceover narrating as he goes. It transpires that Run has fallen in with some dissidents and must take shelter with Assa (Isaach De Bankole) while the military searches everywhere for the assassin. Eventually, a curfew is called to quell unrest, echoing recent events in the still civil-war-torn nation.

While cooling his heels at Assa's, flashbacks unfurl his colorful backstory. Originally from the sticks, Run (played as a child by Abdoul Bah) became an apprentice to the local rainmaker, Tourou (Rasmane Ouedraogo), a paternal mystic given to koan-like pronouncements about the moon and capable of soothsaying. The way his violent death provokes a rainstorm illustrates the very African belief in the veracity of magic, although the deployment of supernatural elements throughout is sparing and matter-of-factly handled.

After Tourou's death, Run

hooks up with Gladys (Reine Sali Coulibaly), a sensuous, super-plus-sized performer who travels the country as Gladys La Mangeuse (Greedy Gladys, in the English subtitles). Her simple but enthusiastically received show basically consists of her sitting on a stage and stuffing her face with food offered by the locals. In the third act, Run falls in with a militia gang loyal to the Admiral (Alexandre Desane), a xenophobic demagogue with political ambitions whose fate is deeply entwined with Run's.

Although it's clear the film is made with a local's intimate knowledge of the geography and social textures of the Ivory Coast, there's a lot of developed art house aesthetic mixed in there too. It's palpable in the off-center camera setups (Israeli DP Daniel Miller's lighting capably evokes the equally bejeweled but subtly different color palettes of the city and countryside), the stripped-down, mesmerizing score by Sebastian Escofet and the looping, cursive editing credited to Barbara Bossuet. Lacote's experience with documentary-making shines through in his rapport with the actors, many of them non- or only semiprofessional, but who all have a relaxed ease in front of the camera. The result is a film that feels both deeply personal and urgent, but not strident or mannered. The current hotness of African cinema just got a little hotter.

**Cast** Abdoul Karim Konate, Isaach De Bankole, Reine Sali Coulibaly

**Director-Screenwriter**

Philippe Lacote // 100 minutes



AFI FEST

Konate flees the scene of the crime.



# 8 Decades of *The Hollywood Reporter*

The most glamorous and memorable moments from a storied history



"He found a very interesting way to make movies with huge stars," says Christian of Samaha (pictured, right, with Stevens, left, and producer Moshe Diamant at Franchise's 2002 AFM party). "A lot of them had these pet projects they couldn't get made, and Elie did that for them."

## Elie Samaha Made an Art of Landing A-Listers for Cheap

IN 2002, FRANCHISE Pictures brought what would become an infamous box-office bomb, *Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever*, to AFM. Starring Antonio Banderas and Lucy Liu as rival secret agents who join forces against a common enemy, the action-thriller recouped just over \$19.9 million of its reported \$70 million budget. For Franchise, which had become known more for its big busts (*Battlefield Earth*, *Get Carter*) than its minor hits (*The Whole Nine Yards*), it was the beginning of the end.

Franchise had been founded in 1997 by actor-turned-producer

Andrew Stevens and Elie Samaha, a dry cleaning mogul and nightclub impresario. Samaha had a knack for ferreting out projects A-list stars desperately wanted to make that were floundering at major studios. He used the strategy to land them at a discount, most famously with John Travolta's *Battlefield*. The actor's Scientology-inspired labor of love had sat on the desks of execs at the majors for three years until a spiritual relic on Samaha's desk sealed the deal between Franchise and Travolta's then-manager, Jonathan Krane.

"There was an impasse over

one sticking point in the budget, and when Krane saw the statue of Buddha on Elie's desk, they both discovered they practiced Buddhism," *Battlefield* director Roger Christian tells *THR*. "Buddha saved that film."

But reviews were poor (*THR* called it "laughable"), and in 2001, German-based distributor Entertainment filed suit, accusing Franchise of inflating budgets and defrauding it to the tune of \$75 million. In 2004, Franchise was ordered to pay Entertainment \$121.7 million and within months filed for bankruptcy.

Today, Christian, 70, praises Samaha for giving him a freedom virtually nonexistent for directors these days. "There was a sense of trust that Elie had with us," says the director, who won a best art direction Oscar in 1978 for *Star Wars*. "He hardly ever turned up on set, left the shooting to who it should be left to and then came to look at the finished product."

Samaha, 59, is now a co-owner of the TCL Chinese Theatre. Stevens, also 59, presides over his own production company and was slated to speak at the AFM Producers Forum on Nov. 9. — MCKENNA AIELLO

### Boxoffice

Continued from page 4—

stellar \$124.3 million to date. Warner Bros. Pictures' *"Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever"* from Franchise Pictures was in the fourth slot in its debut as the Antonio Banderas-Lucy Liu starrer blasted off with an underwhelming \$7.11 million. The actioner's weekend boxoffice was a bit less than hoped for, finding little of its anticipated male audience, but the film carried a relatively low cost, executives at the studio said.

"*Ballistic*" just edged out Paramount's *"The Four Feathers"*, which placed fifth with an estimated \$7.1 million. But *"Four Feathers"* has the edge moving forward because the period drama—starring Wes Bentley, Heath Ledger, Kate Hudson and Djimon Hounsou—had the better per-theater average as it debuted in nearly 800 fewer theaters than *"Ballistic"* and was essentially tied at the boxoffice. Executives at Paramount were encouraged

Film (Distributor)	3-day gross	% change	# of theaters	Per-theater average	Cume* to date
1. <i>Barbershop</i> (MGM)	\$13.3	-36	1,894	\$7,022	\$38.9
2. <i>Banger Sisters</i> (Fox Searchlight)	10.3	—	2,737	3,763	10.3
3. <i>Greek Wedding</i> (IFC)	10.0	-7	1,853	5,397	124.3
4. <i>Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever</i> (Warner)	7.11	—	2,705	2,628	7.11
5. <i>The Four Feathers</i> (Paramount)	7.1	—	1,912	3,713	7.1
6. <i>One Hour Photo</i> (Fox Searchlight)	4.7	-41	1,332	3,529	21.8
7. <i>Signs</i> (Buena Vista)	3.53	-35	2,338	1,510	218.0
8. <i>Stealing Harvard</i> (Sony)	3.5	-42	2,366	1,479	10.8
9. <i>Swimfan</i> (Fox)	3.45	-43	2,573	1,341	24.4
10. <i>Trapped</i> (Sony)	3.2	—	2,227	1,437	3.2

\*ESTIMATE IN MILLIONS

estimate of \$3.2 million. While individual performances varied, taken altogether—and compared with a year earlier—it was a sterling weekend at the boxoffice as the estimated total for the top 12 films was up a sensational 61% from the comparable frame. After an eight-week

in 11 sites and took in an estimated \$190,000, averaging a promising \$17,273 per theater. The distributor is adding 12 more runs Friday. IDP's German-language *"Das Experiment"* from Samuel Goldwyn arrived with an estimated \$22,000 from four engagements, averaging

in Germany during rise averaged \$4,000 per theater. The sophomore week United Artist's *"Iglu Down"* proved encouraging, the dark comedy pulled in an estimated \$838,000 from locales, up 92 from a week as the film expanded to theaters. The Atlantic Stream production averaged a solid per theater and has probably about \$1.3 million in 10. Executives at Fox Searchlight were in understandably good regarding the opening of *Sisters*. "It was a film made for a targeted demographic (females), and for it to be wide and this well is tremendous," president of distribution Steve Gilula said. "Bange carried a cost of about \$10. Altogether, Searchlight prominent place in this weekend as the dist three releases occupy



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